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Bonds Mothers Have With Their Children

During slavery mothers were often separated from their children and this prevented many slaves from developing really close and personal mother-daughter relationships. That loving bond is most often associated with family life outside of the slave system. We see this development of close familial ties occur in the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. After being able to successfully escape bondage, Sethe shows how her children are her word and how she will always do whatever she feels is best for her children, no matter what.

First of all, when Paul D comes, he tries to persuade Sethe to stop apologizing for her daughter, Denver, since she is grown enough to be held accountable for her own actions. Sethe sticks up for her daughter by saying “Grown don’t mean nothing to a mother. A child is a child. They get bigger, older, but grown? What’s that supposed to mean? In my heart it don’t mean a thing” (Morrison 54). This shows how Sethe believes that a mother should always love her children in spite of how old they get or what they do. Sethe makes it clear that no man can ever come in between the relationship she has with her daughter. In their conversation Sethe informs Paul D that “I’ll protect her while I’m live and I’ll protect her when I ain’t” (Morrison 54). This illustrates how Sethe sees her main responsibility as being able to protect her children and watch over them. She views this duty as never ending. It is something that mothers are obligated to do even when their children are dead. Sethe declares that nothing can come in between a mother’s love for her children, not even death.

Also, we see this concept of indestructible love between Sethe and her children when the schoolteacher is coming to bring her and the kids back into slavery. Sethe kills her baby and tries to kill the rest of her kids (Morrison 175). This act shows how much love Sethe has for her children and how she does what she thinks is best for them. She’s doing her best to keep her children from danger. Sethe explains how “I took and put my babies where they’d be safe” (Morrison 193). Sethe doesn’t want them to grow up as slaves because she feels that it is worse than death. Sethe does what she believes in her heart is the right thing to do for her children. We can see how much she loves them by her statement “The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing – the part of her that was clear” (Morrison 296). The words she uses to describe them is proof to how much she adorns them and she knows that she needs to keep them from experiencing the things she went through. They are her best things so she has to make sure they don’t go through hell like she had to.

Another thing is a mother sacrifices for her children and Sethe is a perfect example of this. Sethe tells Denver “What I had to go through later I got through because of you… only me had your milk and God do what he would, I was going to get it to you” (Morrison 233). Sethe has a willingness to risk her life for her children. It’s important that she mentions God because it shows how no force, no matter how strong, can keep her from doing what’s necessary for her children. She has dedicated her life to taking care of them. Another instance in the book that shows Sethe’s sacrificial nature is when she loses her job and they barely have food. The novel mentions how “…Denver noticed her mother go without – pick-eating around the edges of the table and stove” (Morrison 285). Sethe gives her children her last and worries about their stomachs before hers. Sethe puts her children’s needs before herself.

Furthermore, we constantly see how Sethe’s children mean the world to her. She says at one point “Whatever is going on outside my door ain’t for me. The world is in this room. This here’s all there is and all there needs to be” (Morrison 215). Sethe makes it clear that her daughters’ happiness is all that matters to her. If it doesn’t involve her children, then it is not a main priority of hers. Sethe also says “Nobody going to keep me from my children” (Morrison 238) and “I wouldn’t draw breath without my children” (Morrison 240). This symbolizes how without her children Sethe is nothing. They are the reason why she fights to live every day and they are the reason why she hasn’t given up yet.

In conclusion, *Beloved* is a wonderful novel that does an excellent job portraying the bonds that mothers usually have with their children. Sethe not only loves her children, but she is willing to do whatever she can to keep them safe and out of harm’s way. Sethe believes that nothing can keep her from protecting her children. Also, Sethe is willing to risk her life for children and we see how their needs are placed above hers. Sethe’s children are a vital part of her life and in the novel we can see how they mean the world to her.